

# The Old Paths

Volume 19, Issue 3

March 18, 2012

## "Have You Not Read?"

Jarrod Jacobs

**W**ithin the pages of the New Testament, we find Jesus asking folks the question: "Have you not read?" This exact phrase was used by the Lord on three separate occasions, as He confronted the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees when they tried to trap Jesus in His words (Matt. 12:3, 5, 19:4, 22:31; Mk. 12:10, 26; Lk. 6:3).

I think it would be a good thing if we asked ourselves that same question. In light of the fact that we live in a free nation, that grants all of its citizens an education so we can read; and in light of the fact that we have open and public access to the greatest book in the world, have we not read it? From Old to New Testaments, there is great emphasis placed upon the reading and studying of Scripture (Ex. 24:7; Deut. 17:19, 31:11; Josh. 8:34-35; Neh. 8:3, 8, 18; Eph. 3:4; Col. 4:16; Rev 1:3; etc.). Are we obedient to the Lord's will, then? How are we doing at this? The apostle Paul told Timothy, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" (I Tim. 4:13). Could we say we are doing the same? If not, why not?

### Why Read The Bible?

Why ought we spend time reading the Bible when we could be reading the newspaper, or other written materials? Put sim-

ply, because when we read the Bible, we are allowing our minds to access the very words that were "breathed-out" (inspired) by God (II Tim. 3:16-17). No other work can make this claim and be telling the truth. In connection with this, we are allowed access to the very mind of God, because it is His revelation which has been "breathed-out" when we read the word (I Cor. 2:7-16; II Pet. 1:20-21)!

Furthermore, we need to read because it is by reading God's word that we obtain wisdom (Ps. 119:98-100), and can cleanse our way (Ps. 119:9, 11).

It is this same written word that is described as a sword (Eph. 6:18), and a fire, and a hammer (Jer. 23:29). In fact, when we study about the spiritual armor that Christians must wear (Eph. 6:13-18), we will find that every piece has a connection with the written word!

So, why read the Bible? How could we not? How can we deprive ourselves of the spiritual knowledge and strength that God has provided? Yet, it is done day by day by the masses of people on earth! (Hosea 4:6)

### Conclusion

Friends, how are you answering this most important question? How regular and systematic are we in reading the Scriptures? If we are not doing this, then why not? What excuse do we think God will accept from us for not reading His word?

## Successful Evangelism

Larry Ray Hafley, Cookeville, TN

**W**hat is the key to success in converting the lost? If I knew a secret formula, if I had an unfailing plan, I would be a millionaire. Multitudes of saved people would hover around me, but, alas, I do not have a magic system, a guaranteed program. No one else does, either. (The ones who claim they do usually have their system for sale. Does that tell you anything?) No, I am not opposed to literature, CDs, films and tapes which are neatly arranged, attractively presented and scripturally sound. But the answer is not to be found, bound, and sold. It cannot be packaged. We are used to instant oatmeal, instant coffee, instant pudding. Just plop it in the oven and presto, there it is. But there is no microwave gospel conversion kit.

The answer is not to be found in better buildings or more dynamic preachers. A "good depression" is not the solution, either. What, then?

*"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). "You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching" (Acts 5:28). "They lifted up their voices together to God .... And when they had prayed ... they ... continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:24, 31). "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables .... But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2, 4). "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every*

where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house .... for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:20, 27).

Do you see the answer in the passages cited? It means more work, more preaching, more home Bible studies, more gospel meetings, more debates, both public and private, more efforts to initiate conversation about spiritual matters. The work will not be done by merely attending every service. It will not be done by increasing your contribution. It will not be done by subscribing to a gospel paper or any other periodical. There are no short cuts. Success is not to be found in less controversy. **Conversions to Christ are products of pointed preaching and teaching.** Bigger, broader smiles may gain access, but they do not save a soul from death. **Confrontation with error and evil was at the heart of all successful New Testament preaching.** Check and see, if you doubt it. Conviction and conversion is always personal and often painful.

The following is not a slap at churches that have excellent personal work programs. There are some good ones, and there ought to be more. However, there is no substitute for plain old vanilla personal work. Sometimes we unwittingly make "Personal Work" into an institution itself, into a "Church Program." That defeats the basic concept which is truly individual, personal work. Again, see the verses quoted earlier.

The need for greater, intense teaching is apparent. Generally, it is as simple as doing it. Talk to a neighbor, a friend, or a relative. Tell them. Awaken them. Shake

them, if necessary. Teach them what the Bible teaches about their sin, their soul, and their Savior. That is the essence of "successful evangelism."

### **Editor's Note:**

Brother Hafley makes a valid point as he encourages us in the work of evangelism. Truly, evangelism opportunities can be found every day and in every place (i.e., "publicly and from house to house"! ). Let us pray for "open eyes" to see the opportunities. Let us also pray for "open doors" where we might get the gospel into the lives of folks who might not hear it or obey it otherwise (II Thess. 3:1). Let us pray for folks who have "open ears" who are ready to hear the truth, and "open hearts" that are willing to accept the truth (Acts 16:14). I believe folks with open ears and hearts still exist in this land. Our job is to go find them (II Tim. 2:2). Let's do it!!

## **"THE PARALYZING EFFECTS OF SIN"**

*The Gospel Guardian,*  
December 1, 1960, p. 7 (471)

☞ Sin paralyzes **the eye** that it cannot see.

*"For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having*



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Wednesday Bible Study	_____	7:00 p.m.

**"The Ancient Landmark" Television Show: airs on You Tube**  
([www.youtube.com/TheOldPaths1994](http://www.youtube.com/TheOldPaths1994))

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*forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins" (II Pet. 1:9).*

☞ Sin paralyzes **the mouth** that it cannot speak.

*"He will keep the feet of his holy ones, but the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness" (I Sam. 2:9, ASV).*

☞ Sin paralyzes **the hand** that it cannot work.

*"Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evil-doers from the city of the LORD" (Ps. 101:8).*

☞ Sin paralyzes **the feet** that they cannot go.

*"I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come" (Jn. 8:21).*

☞ Sin paralyzes **the ear** that it cannot hear.

*"Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word" (Jn. 8:43).*

☞ Sin paralyzes **the heart** that it cannot trust.

*"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).*

**See episodes Of "The Ancient Landmark"**  
[www.youtube.com/TheOldPaths1994](http://www.youtube.com/TheOldPaths1994)